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**Is
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Worth
While**



REV. PAUL LEEDS AND THREE
OF HIS PARISHIONERS

Is It Worth While?

by

Rev. SAMUEL HOLDEN



WILL it pay? Is it a good investment? Is it worth while? are among the questions asked by business men before they put money into an enterprise. They desire and expect to receive just returns from any investment they may make.

The missionary organizations of the present day ask the same questions before investing money in fields in need of religious help. It does not seem possible that any funds so placed should fail to make some sort of return, even if it does not come in the form of dollars and cents. And it is the opinion of the author that nowhere in the country has money invested in this way produced such a marvelous change in the people and the conditions under which they live as in the Congregational parish at Kinder,

Is It Worth While

Louisiana. For over a quarter of a century this field has been cared for by Rev. Paul Leeds, lovingly known throughout the community as Brother Paul.

His work extends over an entire county and, in some instances, across the county lines. Among his parishioners are descendants of the early French and Spanish explorers and the great-grandchildren of the Acadian exiles referred to by Longfellow in his story of Evangeline. In the woodlands bordering the prairie live the Indians, a remnant of the once powerful Choctaw tribe. The variety of the program, the complexity of the people served, and the marked success which has attended Mr. Leeds' efforts, mark this field as a unique and splendid piece of constructive religious work. Let us see if it has been worth while.

Mr. Leeds came to this section of the country before the first settlers had established homes and when the community was merely a lumber camp. He first preached to the lumberjacks, but when they moved on, he remained



JACKSON LANGLEY,
the Indian Chief

Is It Worth While

with the people who had established little homes among the stumps and slashings and were converting the land into farms. He was with these folks through all their early struggles, working with them, helping them, and living upon what they could share. Today the little settlement is a town. It has stores and factories and a Congregational church with the needful equipment for helping along the social and religious life of the community. There is a comfortable parsonage. Its doors are always ajar and visitors are always welcome.

The church is not unlike any well-kept Congregational church. Among its members are many of the oldest and finest families in the county, and so far as the regular services are concerned there is nothing that would impress the casual visitor as being out of the ordinary. The unusual is to be found in the Indian churches and schools, in the mill settlement, the prairie Sunday School and the outlying preaching stations.

The visitor who is interested in

L. L. SIMMONS,
In charge of the Indian school



missionary problems should make a point of going out to the Indian mission. Here will be found the teacher, L. L. Simmons, who has had charge of the educational work during the last four years. He has shown a real interest in the welfare of his Indian friends and has won their confidence to a marked degree. There are upwards of one hundred and fifty Indian families living in these woods. They speak their own language, live their own lives, and are dependent upon Mr. Leeds for all religious help and instruction. Twenty years ago they were without church or school privileges. They lived in miserable shacks, and had no desire for the better things of life. If they earned a dollar it was spent for whiskey, of which there was an abundance. Their drunken orgies often ended in a fight and it was no uncommon thing for one of them to be seriously injured. In justice to the Indians, however, it should be stated that they were no worse than the white men who lived among them and exploited them for their own gain.

The conditions under which these peo-

ple are living today present a marked contrast to those of fifteen years ago. The dilapidated shacks have been replaced by good, substantial farmhouses, and in the majority of the homes are evidences of thrift and prosperity. They are very proud of their two neat, well-cared-for houses of worship, and their Sunday School sessions are well attended. The school, which is under the care of Mr. Simmons, has an enrollment of forty pupils. Through the efforts of preacher and teacher the whole physical and religious life of these people has been transformed completely. Their devotion to their church and love for their pastor are very evident. It is hard, indeed, to believe that twenty years ago they were living in ignorance and sin, so hard that the visitor is almost certain to inquire if conditions have not been made to appear much darker than they really were. The answer invariably is, "You have no idea of the wonderful change that has been brought about in the lives of these people through the ministry of Mr. Leeds." It should be said also that what is true of the Indians in this respect is true of their

Is It Worth While

white neighbors. The transformation here has been equally great.

Has this been a profitable work? Has it been worth while? Have the Missionary Society and the missionary made a good investment in this field? Are the returns commensurate with the time, energy and money expended?

A good mile from Kinder is the lumber settlement known as Emad. Here is a large sawmill which runs day and night and employs three hundred and fifty men and boys. The town has been in existence less than ten years, and it may continue for some three or four years longer. There is no pretence at permanency; the town will last just as long as the mill can secure logs at a profit.

These people look to Mr. Leeds for preaching services and religious instruction. There is a well-organized Bible class which meets every Sunday morning, a midweek prayer meeting, and a Sunday preaching service every second week. Brother Paul has brought to many lives in the mill settlement, not overburdened with

Is It Worth While

the good things of this life, great help and comfort.

In addition to the Indian mission and the lumber settlement, the Sunday School and preaching station on the prairie is a unique piece of work. The place is known as Three Pines. Why, it is impossible to say, for there are no pines visible. It is located some ten miles from Kinder, and at times the roads are impassable. Without question there is an isolation and solitude on the prairie that does not exist elsewhere, and where there are so few opportunities for social life, the religious service and Sunday School become a great social event. How the people enjoy these gatherings and how much they appreciate the help that is given them!

To the north of Kinder, fully four miles, is the latest development of this fascinating mission field. It lies out in the woodlands away from the beaten path. It is a settlement of earnest people who have taken possession of the cut-over land and are building homes. They have a neat schoolhouse which is the center of all the social and religious life of the place. Many

Is It Worth While

of these folks come long distances in mule teams, over rough roads, that they may be present at the preaching service and Sunday School session. While there is little prospect of building up a self-supporting work in this place for a long time to come, surely people who will travel from three to five miles Sunday after Sunday, in order that they and their children may hear the Gospel message, cannot fail to make a strong appeal to the sympathies of the missionary.

This is but a brief description of our Kinder parish. The results achieved, the splendid, heroic devotion of the pastor who has worked so long, often under great difficulties, is proof positive that the home missionary has not passed. In the light



THE LUMBER SETTLEMENT

Is It Worth While

of what has been accomplished in the transformation of character, the uplifting of life to higher ideals, has the work been worth while? Has the Home Missionary Society made a good investment? What is the answer?



The
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